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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 000865

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TAGS: [KTIP](#) [KWMN](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [AE](#) [BE](#)
SUBJECT: BELGIUM'S JUSTICE MINISTRY REACTS TO 2009 TIP
REPORT

REF: STATE 60473

Classified By: Richard M. Eason for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 7.

12. (C) Summary: Poloff and Polintern delivered reftel Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report to the Justice Minister's Diplomatic Advisor Ambassador Marc Van den Reeck and Trafficking in Persons Coordinator Paule Somers on June 15. Both Van den Reeck and Somers were pleased that Belgium received a Tier 1 ranking in the 2009 report. However, they raised questions about the report's narrative for Belgium under recommendations and in the prosecutions section. The Belgians accepted the recommendation to improve data collection. They were skeptical of the implicit link in the narrative between exploitation of Bulgarian women, the claim that Belgian police received sexual favors from the Bulgarians' traffickers, and the need for training of judges. Van den Reeck was amazed that the UAE sheikha case, in which independent Belgian prosecutors investigated trafficking and awarded her victims protected status, was cited in a way that implied Belgium had not done enough. He said Belgium had done more than most countries would in the same situation. He asked that Belgium be evaluated next year on its broad efforts, which he considered as strong, and not on individual cases. He suggested that to reduce Belgium's rating because the U.S. is not satisfied with the outcome of two individual cases would undermine the credibility of the TIP report itself. Van den Reeck asked that Belgium's efforts at the EU level and its plans to focus on TIP during its 2010 EU presidency be considered as evidence Belgium places a priority on fighting TIP. Finally, he repeated a request for TIP best practices and information sharing on TIP that he made to Poloff in January. End Summary.

Recommendations -----

13. (SBU) Van den Reeck and Somers accepted the TIP report's recommendation that Belgium improve its collection of relevant TIP data, and asked for clarification on the perceived need for additional anti-trafficking training for officials. Van den Reeck was well aware of Belgium's data problem, and said the GOB was in the process of digitizing judicial data. Somers considered the call for additional training for officials as vague. She asked what kind of officials and what type of training were recommended. She believes that the GOB provides sufficient training on TIP.

Prosecutions -----

14. (C) Ambassador Van den Reeck was concerned about the wording in the prosecutions section of the narrative. He was

puzzled by the reference to an NGO that claimed traffickers of Bulgarian women provided sexual favors to police, followed by a sentence stating that judges and other officials would benefit from further training. He and Ms. Somers argued that there was no apparent link between the two. Van den Reeck was also concerned about the treatment of the UAE sheikha case in the TIP report. He considered that it placed Belgium's effort in a negative light, when in fact Belgium's independent prosecutors had done more than most countries would. He said he would instruct the Belgian Ambassador in the UAE to contact U.S. Embassy Abu Dhabi to understand better how the U.S. deals with the international travel of Gulf Arab royal family members. Van den Reeck previously served as the Belgian ambassador in Abu Dhabi, and said the case would be better explored in the context of the UAE rather than Belgium. Van den Reeck observed that Belgium's efforts at combating TIP were quite strong and were a priority for his minister. He suggested that downgrading Belgium next year if these two cases were not resolved to the State Department's satisfaction would undermine the TIP report's credibility.

15. (SBU) Van den Reeck asked for greater cooperation and information sharing on TIP. Poloff said he would relay the message, but noted that G/TIP had asked what kind of best practices and at what level the GOB would like information when he had asked before. Van den Reeck also asked that Belgium's leadership on TIP issues in the Benelux group and its preparations for the 2010 EU presidency be taken into consideration in the next TIP report. He said TIP was a Belgian priority. Belgium would be holding a Benelux meeting on TIP cooperation in the next year, and the GOB would make

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combating TIP an EU-wide focus in 2010. Poloff commended Belgium on its regional and European efforts, but pointed out that international cooperation was not a factor in TIP rankings.

Prevention

16. (C) Poloff explained that prevention campaigns aimed at customers of Belgium's legal prostitution trade were important to Post, EUR, and G/TIP, and that no such demand reduction efforts were observed in Belgium. Van den Reeck asked if the U.S. had data it could share that would indicate that red-light zone clientele were receptive to anti-prostitution advertisements and what forms these campaigns took in other countries where prostitution was legal.

Comment and Action Request

17. (C) Van den Reeck and Somers offered a very frank analysis of Belgium's TIP report evaluation. Though happy Belgium remained in Tier 1, they were concerned that the outcome of two cases mentioned in the narrative might become litmus tests to evaluate Belgium, rather than having the report focus on the global reality that Belgium places a priority on TIP at home and leads on TIP in Europe. On the sheikha case in particular, Van den Reeck considered that Belgium's independent judiciary had set an example that few other countries, including the U.S., could match, and felt strongly it should have been commended as a breakthrough in the report. He repeated a request to share best practices he had made to Poloff in January. Post requests Department provide information to answer the GOB's questions on best practices on TIP and the paragraph 6 question on demand reduction.

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